

THE

COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. I. BOSTON, OCTOBER 15, 1839. No. 20.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

THE Board of Education, in conformity with the provisions of the Act of 20th April, 1837, establishing the Board, beg leave to submit to the Legislature their second Annual Report.

In their first Annual Report, it was stated, that, in the absence of specific powers to undertake measures for the improvement of the schools of the Commonwealth, the Board had been led to seek the voluntary co-operation of the friends of education ; and, as the best mode of obtaining this co-operation, had invited them to meet the Secretary of the Board, in convention, in the several counties of the Commonwealth.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to the Board, that the Legislature should have indicated its approval of this measure, by making it the duty of the Secretary, annually, to attend a meeting in each county, of all such teachers of public schools, members of school committees of the several towns, and friends of education generally, as may voluntarily assemble at the time and place designated by the Board of Education.

This duty has been performed, agreeably to law, during the past season, in all the counties of the State. The meetings have been attended, in all cases, by the Secretary, and by those members of the Board whose other engagements permitted them to be present, and generally by a large number of the friends of education. An address on the most interesting topics connected with Education, on the measures recently adopted by the Legislature for its improvement, and on the defects and evils existing in our system of education, and their remedies, was delivered by the Secretary at each of these conventions, with general acceptance, and, as the Board confidently believe, with very happy effect. A more detailed account of these meetings does not fall directly within the province of the Board ; but they beg leave to remark, that they regard the county conventions, sanctioned by the Act of the Legislature of the 21st of April, 1838, as likely to produce, by a gradual and steady operation, a most desirable effect upon the public mind. It is not to be expected, that at any one, or any number of these conventions, in any given year, decided results and measures of an imposing and brilliant character should be originated. The cause of education, in free governments, does not admit the production of such results, by violent and transient impulses of public sentiment. But we may reasonably hope for the happiest effects from conventions of this character, held under the direct sanction of the Legislature, once in every year, and in every county of the Commonwealth, by an invitation addressed to all who feel an interest in the formation of the minds and hearts of the young,—an invitation transcending all the party lines, which divide the feelings and judgments of men on other important subjects. The meetings, conducted, as they are believed, in all cases, to have been, in perfect harmony, have usually been attended by some of the most respected citizens in the several counties, and will prove, it is hoped, with each succeeding year, still more interesting ; and still more

important, as an occasion of collecting and diffusing information on this great topic of common concern.

The subject of schools for teachers has, for several years, received a considerable share of the attention of the friends of education in the Commonwealth, and has, on many occasions, been favorably considered by the Committees on Education of the two Houses. The Board of Education, in their former Annual Report, presented the subject to the notice of the Legislature. In the course of the last winter, a communication was addressed, by the Secretary of the Board, to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, stating, that the sum of ten thousand dollars had been placed at his disposal, by a friend of education, on condition that the Commonwealth would appropriate the same amount ; the sum to be disbursed, under the direction of the Board of Education, in qualifying teachers for Common Schools. The donation was promptly accepted by the Legislature, on the condition named, and the sum of ten thousand dollars was appropriated to the object specified, by a joint Resolve, approved on the 19th April, 1838.

By this joint act of public and private liberality, the Board found themselves clothed with a trust of equal importance and delicacy. It was evidently the object of this provision, that the practicability and usefulness of institutions for the education of teachers should be brought to the test of experiment ; and the success of this experiment was likely to have a powerful influence over public opinion in the Commonwealth, on this important subject. The particular form, in which the experiment should be made, and all the details of the institution or institutions to be established, were left to the discretion of the Board of Education. Neither the individual donation nor the Resolve of the Legislature was accompanied by any specifications on this head. This consideration imposed upon the Board the necessity of proceeding with caution. They felt it an incumbent duty not to hazard the success of this important measure, by any false step, hastily taken, in the outset. Feeling that institutions for the formation of teachers were relied upon by many intelligent friends of education, as the most important means of improving the character of our Common Schools,—while the mass of the community were perhaps waiting, with opinions yet undecided, the sure teachings of experience on this subject,—the Board felt that more than usual responsibility rested upon them, for a cautious application of the fund placed at their disposal.

This course was rendered still more necessary, by the want of previously-established institutions of the kind in this country, which might serve as a guide. Attempts have been made, it is understood, with considerable success, in a sister State, to connect some provision for the formation of teachers, with regular Academical Institutions ; but the Board are not aware that Normal Schools, properly so called, have as yet been established in any part of the Union. They exist in great numbers in those parts of Europe, where the greatest attention has been paid to the subject of education, and they are regarded as highly important parts of the system of public instruction ; but the condition of our country differs so greatly from that of Europe, in reference to the demand for teachers, and their compensation,—to the resources for the support of public institutions, and to the authorities by which they are to be established, that it rarely is practicable to imitate, to any great extent, the details of European establishments. It is not often either possible or desirable, to do more than derive useful hints from their institutions for the organization or modifications of ours.

One of the first questions that presented itself for the consideration of the Board, was, whether the whole sum placed at their disposal should be expended upon a single experiment, or whether more than one institution should be put in operation at the same time, in different parts of the Commonwealth. After mature deliberation, the latter course was decided upon.

Although, as has been already observed, the terms of the Resolve contained no direction to the Board in this or any other respect, yet it was thought that the Legislature, in the language employed, intimated a preference to the most extensive measures, which the nature of the case, and the means at command, admitted. The fund was to be "expended in qualifying teachers for the Common Schools of Massachusetts." Had the Legislature contemplated the establishment simply of a single institution,—of one Normal School,—it was supposed that such a purpose would have been made more apparent, by some terms of limitation in their Resolve.

It was further considered, that the sum of money at the disposition of the Board, though reflecting the greatest credit on the public and private munificence by which it was furnished, was evidently not to be regarded as a permanent endowment. No authority was given for its investment; nor would it, if invested in buildings, fixtures, a library, and an apparatus, have left a fund adequate to the salaries of teachers even for a single institution. It was, at the same time, fully sufficient for the establishment of several Normal Schools in different parts of the Commonwealth, provided with means for carrying on a fair experiment in the education of teachers, for a sufficient length of time to bring the usefulness of such institutions to the test of experience. The Board had the means of knowing, that such a distribution of the fund was approved by the individual, whose liberal provision had been accepted by the Legislature, as it appeared to them, as has been observed, to meet the views, rather intimated than distinctly set forth, in the Resolve of the General Court, and the Report of the Committee on Education of the House of Representatives, with which the Resolve originated.

It was accordingly decided by the Board to establish three or four Normal Schools, in different parts of the Commonwealth, as soon as arrangements could be made for the purpose. It was supposed that the sum of twenty thousand dollars, with the assistance which might be expected from the friends of education, in a manner which will be presently spoken of, would be sufficient to put in operation, and to sustain, for three years, at least, this number of Normal Schools in different parts of the State, and thus bring fairly within the reach of the people the means of partaking their advantages and estimating their usefulness, with a view to the question of their final adoption or rejection as a constituent part of the system of school education. The Board would have been glad to go further, and to make arrangements for establishing a Normal School in every county of the Commonwealth, but the funds at their disposal evidently made this impossible. It was their duty, on the one hand, to give to as large a portion of the people as possible, on equal terms, an opportunity of witnessing and trying the experiment, and at the same time not to fritter away the fund, by too minute a distribution.

Should one school only be founded, in whatever part of the Commonwealth it were placed, it would be difficult of access to the major part of those, of both sexes, who would be desirous of enjoying its advantages. The class of young men and women who devote themselves, generally for the early part of life, to the business of instruction, and who would be likely to seek the advantages of a Normal School, would be somewhat deterred by the expense of a journey to a remote part of the State, and the inconvenience of a residence at a great distance from home. The effect of this would be unfavorable to the main design of the experiment, which is, to bring home to the majority of the citizens of Massachusetts the usefulness of institutions for the education of teachers, and to place it in such a light before the people, that they will eventually be disposed to make provision, in every county of the Commonwealth, for the means of qualifying all the teachers required for their Common Schools.

In addition to the objections to a single institution already alluded to, and

to the local jealousy, of which it might possibly be the object, in those parts of the State distant from the place of its establishment, the Board felt unwilling to stake the entire success of the experiment on the result of one trial. In an institution of a novel character,—(and of course not capable of being carried on by the momentum which exists in a system of long-established and familiar institutions, and enables them to survive the effects of temporary and local mismanagement,)—the consequences of error at the outset would be fatal. Permanent injury would be done to the cause of education in this community, should the entire fund provided for this interesting purpose be exhausted upon one establishment, and should that fail, from any mismanagement, to win the public confidence.

In avoiding these risks of a single establishment, it was deemed an object by the Board to secure the other manifest advantages of a plurality. Besides those already alluded to, the establishment of three, and, if found practicable, of four schools, would effect another object of considerable importance. The Board soon ascertained that, in some parts of the community, and by some of the friends of education, it was deemed advisable to make the commencement with a school for the instruction of female teachers. It was doubtful, however, whether the public at large would have been satisfied with the establishment of a single school exclusively for their qualification. A school exclusively for males would have been open to still more forcible objections, of the same character ;—and no experiment would probably have been deemed complete, which was limited to an establishment for either sex exclusively. How far it may be deemed expedient to establish schools where both sexes shall be admitted, must depend on public opinion in the section of the State where the school may be placed ; and on this point the Board are unable as yet to form a definite opinion. Where no objection is made to the admission of both sexes, there will of course be a convenience in organizing the school on this principle.

As soon as it was generally understood, that a fund for the establishment of Normal Schools had been placed at the disposition of the Board, considerable interest was manifested on the subject of their location ; and wishes were early indicated, in behalf of different places, that they might be selected for this purpose. The first movement of this kind was made from the county of Plymouth. A highly respectable Committee of the convention of the friends of education, in that county, appeared before the Board, at their annual meeting in May, with a view to a conference on this subject. At the same meeting, a conference on the same subject was held by the Board with the Hon. J. J. Fiske, of Wrentham, since deceased, who appeared in behalf of a portion of the citizens of that place, desirous of some arrangement, which might connect the establishment of a Normal School with the Academy at Wrentham. About the same time, similar overtures were made to the Board by a Committee of the Trustees of Dummer Academy, at Byfield, in the county of Essex. At a subsequent period, more or less direct applications have been made in behalf of Barre, Southbridge, and Lancaster in Worcester county, of Topsfield in Essex county, of Concord and Lexington in Middlesex, of Worthington in Hampshire, of New Salem and Northfield in Franklin, and of Braintree in Norfolk. There was abundant reason to conclude, that, in proportion as the public attention should be called to the subject, there would be the same desire felt and expressed, for the establishment of Normal Schools, in other parts of the Commonwealth.

It could not but be gratifying to the Board of Education, to receive these proofs of an extensive, and rapidly-increasing interest on this subject. It imposed upon them, however, the necessity of selecting between places, which, on the ground of geographical position, were equally advantageous, or nearly so. In this state of things, it was obviously the duty of the Board to select those places,—having regard to their proper distribution through-

out the Commonwealth,—for the establishment of the Normal Schools, where the most liberal co-operation might be tendered, on the part of the citizens. They were led to think, from the opinions entertained and expressed by sanguine friends of the cause in various places, that some of the towns or counties would be disposed so far to unite their efforts with those of the Board, as to furnish buildings, and fixtures, and a fund towards current charges, provided the expenses of instruction were defrayed out of the means at the disposal of the Board. It was obvious that such a system of co-operation, between the friends of education and the Board, would be productive of the happiest effects. It would secure to the schools to be organized the advantage of a warm and vigilant local sympathy. The public, by whose aid they had been in part established, would feel a greatly enhanced interest in their prosperity. It furnished the most unobjectionable ground of selection between different places, to which the attention of the Board was called; and, what was of still greater consequence, it would enable the Board, out of the means under their control, to establish a larger number of Normal Schools, than would otherwise be practicable.

These reasons led the Board to bestow the most respectful consideration on the various overtures made to them, and to allow all the time that was desired for those interested to consult their fellow-citizens, and ascertain the extent to which co-operation might be expected. In one of the counties, it was thought expedient by the friends of education, to take the sense of the people of the towns on the day of the general election, whether they would raise their proportion of the fund proposed. Committees of the Board have visited several towns, on behalf of which application has been made, for the purpose of examining the premises which have been offered to be placed at the disposal of the Board, for the accommodation of a Normal School. Till these preliminary steps had been taken, it was impossible to proceed to the definitive location of a school or schools.

At their last meeting, on the 23th December, having received, from persons interested in the cause of Education, at Lexington, in the county of Middlesex, the offer of a building well fitted for the purpose, and of liberal pecuniary co-operation toward the current expenses of the institution, it was determined to proceed forthwith to the establishment of a Normal School, for the education of female teachers, in that place. The situation was deemed as favorable as any one which could be selected, to accommodate the counties of Essex and Middlesex, and generally the northeastern section of the State. The village has all the advantages to be desired, of local situation. Great interest is manifested in the establishment on behalf of many citizens of the place, and the premises placed at the disposition of the Board are convenient and ample.

In the regulations adopted by the Board for the schools to be established, it is proposed that candidates for admission should have attained the age of seventeen years, if males, and sixteen, if females, and be instructed, if disposed to continue in the institution so long, for a period of three years. But, presuming that this is a longer time than the greater part of candidates would be able to pass at a Normal School, it is designed to arrange a course of study, to occupy a year; at the end of which time, a certificate of qualifications will be given to all who have merited it. The course of studies will be designed to effect two objects. First, the attainment of a more thorough and systematic acquaintance with the branches usually taught in Common Schools, and an adequate foundation in other parts of knowledge highly useful to the skilful teacher; and, secondly, the art of imparting instruction to the youthful mind, which will be taught in its principles, and illustrated by opportunity for practice, by means of a model school. The course of instruction will accordingly embrace whatever is required by the statute to be taught in the Common Schools of Massachusetts, (with the exception

of the ancient languages,) and such subsidiary studies as are required in a Normal School, according to the foregoing view of its objects. The principles of Christian ethics and piety, common to the different sects of Christians, will be carefully inculcated; and a portion of Scripture will be daily read in all the Normal Schools established by the Board.

It being made the duty of the Board, to submit to the Legislature an account of the manner in which the moneys appropriated for qualifying teachers have been expended, the Board would state, in conclusion of this part of this Report, that no disbursements have as yet taken place for this object, nor has any thing been drawn from the treasury.

In the Report of the Secretary of the Board, bearing date January 1st, 1838, and communicated to the Legislature at the last session, the following remark is made: "Not a little inconvenience results from the fact, that school committees are elected at the annual town-meetings in Spring, and are obliged to make their returns in October following. Their returns, therefore, cover but half the time of their continuance in office, while they cover half the time of the official existence of their predecessors. It is for the Legislature to say, whether there be any good reason, why the time covered by these returns, should not be coincident with their duration in office." In conformity with these suggestions, it was provided, by the fifth section of a law passed 13th April, 1838, that the form of the blanks, and the inquiries provided for by the statute of the year 1837, and the time when the same shall be returned into the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, shall hereafter be prescribed by the Board of Education. Supposing this authority to have been given to the Board, by the Legislature, for the specific purpose of providing a remedy for the inconvenience alluded to, in the passage just cited from the Secretary's Report, the Board, at their annual meeting in May last, adopted a resolution, that the annual returns of the school committee should be made on the first day of May in each year. By this arrangement, the returns of each committee will embrace the condition of the schools for the entire year, during which that committee has been in office. The Board were, of course, aware, and they regretted, that, by the change of the time in making the returns, it would be impracticable to make the annual apportionment of the income of the school-fund, at the commencement of the present year. In consideration, however, of the convenience and usefulness of the change, and the greatly-increased value which it will give to the returns, they venture to hope that it will be generally approved by the community. The existing provisions of law require, that the income of the school-fund shall be apportioned by the Secretary and Treasurer, and paid over, on the 15th of January, in each year, to the towns which shall have made the prescribed annual returns, on or before the first day of the preceding November. The change in the time of making the returns will require a modification of the law on this subject. It will be for the Legislature to decide, whether, in making provision for the apportionment of the income of the fund, on the basis of the returns to be made on or before the first day of May next, it will order the distribution of the additional half year's income, which will then have accrued. Should this be done, no loss will have resulted to the towns from the delay in the apportionment, except a delay of six months in the receipt of a year's dividend; and even this will be, in some measure, compensated by a six months' anticipation of one half of the dividend of the following year.

In the former Annual Report of the Board, some observations were made on the subject of School Libraries. As far as the information possessed by the Board extends, scarce any of the districts of the Commonwealth have as yet availed themselves of the authority, granted by the Act of 12th of April, 1837, to expend, for this object, thirty dollars for the first year, and

ten for each succeeding year. A confident hope, however, is entertained, that, in proportion as the attention of the districts is called to the subject, and as convenient editions of books well calculated for the purpose are published, School Libraries will begin to be objects of interest throughout the Commonwealth, and ultimately be found in all the districts. The opinion was expressed last year, that the preparation of such collections, must be left to the enterprise of intelligent publishers, who, at the present reduced cost of printing, have it in their power, by the circulation of good books, at reasonable prices, to render an inestimable service to the public.

The Board have regarded the law of the 12th of April, 1837, as the necessary result of the school system of Massachusetts, as it has existed from time immemorial. The previous want of a regular provision for School Libraries, must be considered a serious defect in that system. To what avail are our youth taught to read, if no facilities exist for obtaining books? The keys of knowledge are useless to him who has no access to the volumes to be unlocked. Although it is certainly true, that no part of our State is wholly deficient in valuable works of science and literature, yet it must be freely confessed, they do not exist in such plenty as could be desired. In a portion of the towns, there are social libraries. These, it is believed, generally depend on the precarious support of annual subscriptions, and are, too many of them, in a neglected and declining state. They can, of necessity, be conveniently accessible only to that portion of the population, who live near the place where they are deposited. Where they are kept up and supplied with a selection of the valuable works daily issuing from the press, they are universally admitted to be blessings to the community.

By the Act of 12th of April, 1837, the Legislature has put it in the power of every district in the Commonwealth to possess itself of this blessing; and the Board regard it as a very interesting part of their duty, to do whatever may be in their power to facilitate the execution of this law. Among the causes, it is supposed, which have hitherto prevented the districts from availing themselves of the authority to commence the formation of these libraries, is the difficulty of making the selection;—a difficulty of considerable magnitude, when but a small sum is to be expended, and it is necessary to send to some distant place for a supply of books. To remove this obstacle in some degree, the Board of Education determined, at an early period of the present year, to recommend to some respectable publishing house to issue from the press a collection of works as a Common-School Library, to consist of two series; the one adapted for the use of children, the other for a maturer class of readers. The proposal has been acceded to by Messrs. Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb, of Boston. The enterprise is to be entirely at the expense and risk of the publishers, who agree to execute the works in a style, and to furnish them to those who may choose to become purchasers, at a rate, to be approved by the Board, and which was ascertained to be the lowest, at which an arrangement could be made for its satisfactory execution. Each book in the series is to be submitted to the inspection of every member of the Board, and no work to be recommended, but on their unanimous approval. Such a recommendation, it was believed, would furnish a sufficient assurance to the public, that a sacred adherence would be had to the principle, which is imbodyed in the legislation of the Commonwealth, on the subject of school-books, and which provides that "school committees shall never direct to be purchased, or used in any of the town schools, any books, which are calculated to favor the tenets of any particular sect of Christians."

It will remain entirely optional, with the school districts, in availing themselves of the authority conferred by the Act of 12th of April, 1837, whether they will purchase the books recommended by the Board. It is

by the law left with the discretion of the districts, what rules and regulations may be adopted for establishing and maintaining the libraries authorized to be formed ; and the Board have as little inclination as right to encroach on the exercise of this discretion. It is their purpose only to assist and encourage the publishers in the selection and publication of a series of volumes, well adapted for the use proposed, to consist of a portion of the most approved works in science and literature, with which our language is enriched, executed in a style, and afforded at a price, which will put them generally within the reach of the school districts of the Commonwealth. The Board have great satisfaction in stating, that, in the preparation of a portion of the books to be published as a Common-School Library, the publishers have been led to expect the assistance of many of the most distinguished writers of our own country.

In submitting their present Report, the Board cannot but express their grateful sense of the attention, which was paid, by the Legislature of the Commonwealth of the last year, to the various suggestions made in their former Report. At no former session of the General Court has a greater interest been manifested in our schools ; and the Board are persuaded that the enactments of the last year, will result in their permanent improvement. The school system of the Commonwealth is good, because it is simple. The State provides that the people shall maintain schools, and it organizes a certain machinery for their establishment and supervision. Much of this machinery is in the hands of the school committees. On their fidelity, intelligence, and zeal, it mainly depends whether the schools prosper. In those towns and districts where the committees are composed of intelligent, active, and patriotic citizens, teachers are found to be competent, school-houses are kept in repair, and the rising generation grows up under all the advantages of education, which an anxious parent can desire for a hopeful child. Where the reverse is the case, the whole system falls into disorder and decay. The powers vested in the Board of Education were wisely of a recommendatory character. Among the objects which first engaged their attention, were the organization and duties of school committees. The Act of 13th April, 1838, remedies the greatest of the formerly-existing evils,—provides that the official year of the committee shall coincide with that of their returns,—requires that they shall make an annual report in open town-meeting,—shall keep a record of their proceedings, to be transmitted to their successors,—and authorizes a moderate compensation for their labors. With these wise provisions of law, every thing else must be left to the public spirit and Christian zeal of the citizens who assume this important trust.

In conclusion, the Board would express their strong reliance on the wisdom of the Legislature and the intelligence of the people, to continue that favorable regard of the cause of Education, which has in all former times been the glory and strength of the Commonwealth. Situated at one extremity of the Union, and occupying but an inconsiderable spot on its surface, what is it that has given to Massachusetts a name and a praise in the land ? The Board know of nothing, under Providence, but the principles and institutions of our fathers ; and among them, as far as mere human influences are concerned, pre-eminently our Common Schools. With the lapse of time and the progress of events, our importance in all physical relations, such as territory, material resources, and numbers, is daily growing proportionably less. Of the new States in the West, among whose first settlers, within the memory of man, were some of our own adventurous citizens, one already greatly outnumbers in population our ancient and venerable Commonwealth. It is doubly incumbent upon us to look well to the sources of intellectual and moral well-being, and see to it, that, whatever be the relative rank of the Commonwealth in numbers and wealth, she is

determined not to sink to a secondary and degraded place in the scale of mental improvement.

EDWARD EVERETT,
GEORGE HULL,
EMERSON DAVIS,
EDMUND DWIGHT,
GEORGE PUTNAM,
ROBERT RANTOUL, JR.
THOMAS ROBBINS,
JARED SPARKS,
CHARLES HUDSON.

Boston, 28th December, 1838.

NOTE. At the meeting of the Board of Education, at which the foregoing Report was adopted, it was decided, if possible, to make immediate arrangements for the location of another Normal School, in the central portion of the State. Proposals had already been received from those interested in the subject in several towns, and a Committee of the Board had visited them, with a view to further inquiry on the spot. The town of Barre was recommended by various considerations of locality and ease of access. Premises sufficient for the accommodation of the school, were, by a vote of the town, placed at the disposal of the Board, and pecuniary aid toward current expenses, guarantied on the part of individuals. The Board, however, having considered that some further provisions for the accommodation of the school would be required, did not feel themselves warranted, at their last meeting, in a final decision. The subject was referred to a Committee of the Board, authorized to confer with the Committee of the citizens of Barre, with the understanding, that if the conditions deemed requisite by the Board were complied with, a Normal School should be established in that place. The conditions have been promptly acceded to; and immediate arrangements will be made for the organization of the school.

The Board have understood, that in the section of the State which would furnish the pupils of this institution, no objection would be made to the admission of both sexes. Should this opinion prove to be correct, the school will probably be organized on this principle.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION.

GENTLEMEN,—I hereby respectfully submit some account of my proceedings during the last year, in discharging the duties of the office you have confided to me. I should deem it an encroachment upon the province of the Board to advert to such topics in the administration of the school law, as are equally as well known to the Board as to myself;—such, for instance, as the measures they have taken for establishing Normal Schools, for causing School Libraries to be prepared, and the designation of the form and time for making the School Returns. I shall, therefore, confine myself to such facts as have come more immediately within my own knowledge, and to the considerations suggested by them.

During the past season, after having given seasonable notice by sending circulars to the school committee of each town in the Commonwealth, I visited the fourteen counties in the State, and, at convenient and central places, have met such of the friends of Education as chose to attend. At a majority of these meetings I have been aided by the presence and co-operation of one or more of the members of the Board. Other distinguished citizens, who, for many years, have received the fullest testimonials of the

people's confidence, have been present, and have taken an active and most useful part in the proceedings. Except in the three counties of Hampden, Berkshire, and Essex, the conventions have been well attended by school committees, teachers, and other friends of Education. The time of the meetings has been occupied by statements, respecting the condition of the public schools, by discussions in regard to the processes of teaching, and by the delivery of one or more addresses.

It appeared from facts ascertained during the last part of the year 1837, and communicated by me to the Board in the Report of January 1, 1838, that the Common-School system of Massachusetts had fallen into a state of general unsoundness and debility ; that a great majority of the schoolhouses were not only ill-adapted to encourage mental effort, but, in many cases, were absolutely perilous to the health and symmetrical growth of the children ; that the schools were under a sleepy supervision ; that many of the most intelligent and wealthy of our citizens had become estranged from their welfare, and that the teachers of the schools, although, with very few exceptions, persons of estimable character and of great private worth, yet, in the absence of all opportunities to qualify themselves for the performance of the most difficult and delicate task, which, in the arrangements of Providence, is committed to human hands, were, necessarily, and therefore without fault of their own, deeply and widely deficient in the two indispensable prerequisites for their office, viz., a knowledge of the human mind, as the subject of improvement ; and a knowledge of the means best adapted wisely to unfold and direct its growing faculties. To expect that a system, animated only by a feeble principle of life, and that life in irregular action, could be restored at once to health and vigor, would be a sure preparation for disappointment. It is now twenty years, since the absolute government of Prussia, under the impulse of self-preservation, entered upon the work of entirely remodelling their Common Schools, so as to give them a comprehensiveness and an efficacy, which would embrace and educate every child in the kingdom. In this undertaking, high intelligence has been aided, at every step, by unlimited power ; and yet the work is but just completed ;—in some places and in some circumstances of detail, I believe, not yet completed. Their engine of reform is the command of the sovereign, enforced by penalties ; ours, is the intelligence of the people, stimulated by duty. Their plan has the advantage of efficiency and despatch, but it has this disadvantage, that what the ruler may decree to-day, his successor may revoke to-morrow ; ours has the disadvantage of slowness in execution, but the compensatory advantage of permanency, when accomplished. Besides, if our schools are voluntarily advanced, through the intelligence of the people, the agents themselves will be benefited, almost as much as the objects. These considerations ought to satisfy those persons, who seem impatient of delay, and who think that any Board of Education could reanimate our system in one, or even in a few years.

Considering, then, the description of the means to be employed for raising our schools to a reasonable and practicable point of usefulness, it may be confidently stated, that the efforts which have been made, in different places, have accomplished something already, and have given sure auguries of a speedier progression hereafter.

In my circuit this year, Nantucket was the first place visited. The town contains almost ten thousand inhabitants. When there, the previous season, there was but one set of public schools for all the children. To them, only children over the age of six years were admitted, and no public provision existed for the education of those below. During the last year, the town has established two primary schools for small children, and also a school (as it is denominated in the statute) for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the town. To the last, pupils are admitted on passing an examination in the branches, required to be taught in the middle or secondary schools.

The organization, therefore, is now perfect. The small children are provided for, by themselves. This is an advantage, which can hardly be overestimated. For the purpose of preserving order and silence in schools, composed of scholars of all ages, it becomes almost necessary to practise a rigor of restraint and a severity of discipline upon the small children, which is always injurious and often cruel. The youngest scholars are, constitutionally, most active. Their proportion of brain and nervous system, compared with the whole body, is much the greatest. Their restlessness does not proceed from volition, but from the involuntary impulses of Nature. They vibrate at the slightest touch; and they can no more help a responsive impulse at every sight and sound, than they can help seeing and hearing with open eyes and ears. What aggravates the difficulty is, that they have nothing to do. At a time, when Nature designs they shall be more active, than at any other period of life, a stagnation of all the powers of mind and body is enforced. But while the heart beats and the blood flows, the signs of life cannot be wholly suppressed; and, therefore, the steady working of Nature's laws is sure to furnish the teacher with occasions for discipline. If it would be intolerably irksome for any of the large scholars to sit still for half a day, in a constrained posture, with hands unoccupied, and eyes looking straight into vacancy, how much more intolerable is it for the small ones? Hence the importance of having such a gradation of schools, in every place where it is practicable, as has been lately established in Nantucket. Another invaluable advantage of having three grades of schools is, that while it diminishes, at least one-half, the number of classes in each school, it increases the number in each class, and thus allows the teacher to devote more time to the recitations and to the oral instruction of his enlarged classes. Another point, of great importance to the schools, was well illustrated in the change at Nantucket. When I was there in 1837, a private school was in operation, kept by one of the most accomplished instructors in the State, and sustained at great expense to its patrons. When the arrangement, above referred to, was made, this gentleman was employed by the town to keep the town school. The private school was, of course, given up; but he carried with him, into the town school, most of his former pupils. And he now educates many others, who could not afford the expense of the private school. Although, in such cases, the compensation of the teacher may not be quite as great, nominally, yet it will probably be worth as much; as he will receive it directly from the town, in regular instalments, and will have none of the trouble of collecting bills.

Within the last year, also, every schoolhouse in Nantucket has been provided with a good ventilator and with new and comfortable seats. This leaves little to be desired in that town, in regard to the places, where the processes of education are carried on. Competent teachers, fidelity in the committee, suitable school-books, libraries, and a good apparatus, and bringing *all* the children within the beneficent influences of the school, will complete the work.

For the town school, an extensive and valuable apparatus has been provided, and also some of a less costly description, for the primary schools. To accomplish these praiseworthy purposes, the town, last year, almost doubled its former appropriation.

Another highly-gratifying indication of increased attention to the welfare of the schools, has been given by the city of Salem. A year ago, the schoolhouses in that city were without ventilation, and many of them with such seats as excited vivid ideas of corporal punishment, and almost prompted one to ask the children, for what offence they had been committed. At an expense of about two thousand dollars, the seats in all the schoolhouses, except one, have been reconstructed, and provisions for ventilation

have been made. I am told, that the effect in the quiet, attention, and proficiency of the pupils, was immediately manifested.

In many other places, improvements of the same kind have been made, though to a less extent, and in a part only of the houses. It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose, that nothing remains to be done in this important department of the system of public instruction. The cases mentioned are the slightest exceptions, compared with the generality of the neglect. The urgent reasons for making the Report on schoolhouses, the last year, still continue. In the important point of ventilation, so essential to the health, composure, and mental elasticity of the pupils, most of the houses remain without change; except, indeed, that very undesirable change, which has been wrought by time and the elements;—or such change as has been effected by stripping off the external covering of the house, on some emergency for fuel. The children must continue to breathe poisonous air, and to sit upon seats, threatening structural derangement, until parents become satisfied, that a little money may well be expended to secure to their offspring the blessings of sound health, a good conformation, and a strong, quick-working mind.

A highly-respectable physician, who, for several years, has attended to the actual results of bad internal arrangements and bad locations for schoolhouses, upon the health of the pupils, took measures, during the past summer, to ascertain with exactness, the relative amount of sickness, suffered by the children, in a given period of time, in two annual schools. The schools were selected on account of their proximity, being but a short distance from each other; they consisted of very nearly the same number of children, belonging to families in the same condition of life, and no general physical causes were known to exist, which should have distinguished them from each other, in regard to the health of the pupils. But one house was dry and well ventilated; the other damp, and so situated as to render ventilation impracticable. In the former, during a period of forty-five days, five scholars were absent, from sickness, to the amount in the whole of twenty days. In the latter, during the same period of time, and for the same cause, nineteen children were absent, to an amount in the whole of one hundred and forty-five days;—that is, almost four times the number of children, and more than seven times the amount of sickness; and the appearances of the children not thus detained by sickness, indicated a marked difference in their condition as to health. On such a subject, where all the causes in operation may not be known, it would be unphilosophical to draw general conclusions, from a particular observation. No reason, however, can be divined, why this single result should not fairly represent the average of any given number of years. Similar results for successive years, must satisfy any one, respecting the true cause of such calamities; if, indeed, any one can remain skeptical in regard to the connexion between good health and pure air.

The committee who take charge of the Primary Schools in the city of Boston, established, in the month of September last, a 'Model School.' To this school it is intended to devote an unusual share of attention. It is under the immediate supervision of gentlemen, intelligent, and highly interested in its success. Their object is to select the best books, to learn, as far as possible, the true periods of alternation between study and exercise for young children, and to improve upon existing processes for moral and intellectual training. When their plans are somewhat matured by observation and experience, it is their intention to bring the teachers of the other Primary Schools, (of which there are more than eighty in the city,) in regular succession into this school, to familiarize them with whatever, upon experiment, shall be found to succeed well. Although it cannot be doubted, that this enterprise, under the judicious management of the com-

mittee, will prove very beneficial ; yet it is hardly rational to anticipate, that it will supersede the necessity of a Normal School for the city.

I cannot doubt, that the Board will hear, with lively gratification, other evidence of an increased interest in this subject. Considering how inadequate to the wants of the whole community, a county meeting—annual only—on the subject of Education, must necessarily be, several of the county conventions appointed large and most respectable committees to prepare and deliver, or cause to be prepared and delivered, a lecture in the different towns of the respective counties ;—or, where towns were large, then, in different places in the same town. In pursuance of this excellent plan, such lectures have already been delivered, or lecturers are now engaged in delivering them, in the counties of Nantucket, Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester, and to some extent in Essex.

During the last summer, too, a few gentlemen in the city of Boston, adopted measures to procure the delivery of a course of weekly lectures for the benefit of teachers in the city. This course commenced about the middle of October last, and still continues. Engaged, in country and city, in this voluntary and gratuitous labor, are gentlemen, who have been, or are, members of the State and National Legislatures, counsellors at law, physicians, clergymen of all denominations, experienced and long-approved teachers, and some of the most popular writers in the State. All these intelligent and forecasting men, who see, that future consequences can alone be regulated by attention to present causes, are profoundly convinced, that unless juvenile feelings, in this State and Country, are assiduously trained to an observance of law and a reverence for justice, it will be impossible to restrain adult passions from individual debasement and public commotion. The course of a stream, which a thousand men cannot obstruct, as it flows into the ocean, may be turned by a child at the fountain. Above, it will yield to the guidance of a hand ; below, its flood will sweep works and workmen away.

There are other indications, that public opinion on this subject is advancing in the right direction. More committees are inquiring into the qualifications of candidates for teaching, instead of taking such qualifications for granted. Persons, who had taught school a dozen winters, have been set aside for incompetency in the elementary branches. The law, requiring committees to visit the schools, has been better observed, than ever before ; and teachers are realizing the benefit of such visitations, in the encouragement and stimulus they have supplied to the pupils. Many teachers are more justly appreciating the true elevation and responsibility of their vocation ; and are animated by those high motives, whose prerogative it is to convert toil into pleasure.

On the reverse side of this picture, however, it is my duty to present, that of the twenty-nine rich and populous towns, bound by law to keep a school, at least ten months in each year, "for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the town," and which were reported, last year, as violating this law, by non-compliance, only two, viz., Nantucket and Taunton, have since established the schools required. It will be recollected, that this class of towns takes precedence of almost all the others in wealth ; that they expend a far less proportion of money, per scholar, for the support of public schools, than the poorer and more sparsely-populated towns, while, at the same time, they expend a far greater proportion of money for private schools. At the rate of two in a year, it will take about fifteen years for all the towns in this class to comply with the law ;—a length of probation, it is to be feared, which will tend to harden rather than reform the delinquents.

Sufficient time has not yet elapsed to allow the practical results of last winter's legislation to be developed. The law for the compensation of school committees was not enacted, until after the committees for the current year had been elected. The reasons, which, in former years, had de-

tered so many competent men from accepting that meritorious office, still existed. The ensuing annual elections will show, how far the public will consent, that any man, incompetent for, or heartless in, the performance of this responsible duty, shall be intrusted with it, and receive its compensation. Nor has the time yet arrived, at which all school committees are to make to their respective towns a report, "designating particular improvements and defects in the methods or means of education, and stating such facts and suggestions in relation thereto, as, in their opinion, will best promote the interests and increase the usefulness of the schools." Great good will unquestionably result from each of these provisions.

The 'Register,' prescribed by the law of last winter, "to be faithfully kept, in all the town and district schools in the Commonwealth," has been almost universally (one or two places only, so far as I have learned, undertaking to absolve themselves from a compliance with the law) introduced into the schools, with excellent effect. Skilful teachers find it a valuable auxiliary in securing greater regularity in the attendance of the scholars. By the Report of last year, it appeared, that "a portion of the children, dependant wholly upon the Common Schools, absented themselves from the winter school, either permanently or occasionally, equal to a permanent absence of about one third part of their whole number; and a portion absented themselves from the summer schools, either permanently or occasionally, equal to a permanent absence of considerably more than two fifths of their whole number." Thus, after all the labor and expense of establishing, maintaining, and supervising the schools have been incurred; after the schools have been brought to the very doors of the children; the school itself is made to suffer, in all its departments, by the inconstant attendance of the children, and the children suffer, in habits and character, from inconstant attendance upon the school. Whatever diminishes this evil, is cheaply bought, though at much cost. The keeping of a daily Register is also the only means, by which the committees can be enabled to make accurate, instead of conjectural, returns, for the Annual Abstracts. The 'Register' and the 'Annual Abstract' are so far parts of a whole, that both should be continued or both abolished. The Abstracts are prepared as statistics for legislative action and economical science. If true, they will evince philosophical principles to be the basis of wise measures. But if false, they lead to practical errors, with scientific certainty; and they annul the chance which ignorance enjoys of being sometimes right by accident or mistake.

The Board are already aware that the 'Form' of the Register, prepared this year, was sent out in single sheets, and for one year only, that its fitness might be tested; and that, "in order to establish a more perfect and permanent Register, all persons were invited to suggest improvements." In the circulars, sent to the school committees, this invitation was repeated. Verbally or in writing, I have received a variety of suggestions, for modifying its form. Some of these suggestions are diametrically opposite to each other, even where they come from towns lying side by side, and whose general circumstances (except in the amount of attention bestowed upon their schools) are similar. The number of towns in the country is precisely equal, which, on one side, declare it to be too complicated and particular; and, on the other, suggest, as improvements, the addition of a number of new items. I mention these particulars that the towns may know, how impossible is a conformity to views so conflicting. As some teachers and school committees do not seem to be aware of the advantages of keeping so full a Register as has been proposed, perhaps it may be expedient to prepare a Form, embracing those facts only, of which a record should be kept, in every school; and then, to leave it to those who more fully appreciate its uses, to keep such a supplementary Register as they may think best.

The Report on Schoolhouses, made by me to the Board in March last, detailing, among other things, (see pp. 287, 288,) a plan for a union of school districts and a gradation of schools, in places where the compactness of the population would allow, was followed by the Act of the Legislature of April 25th, authorizing a union of school districts for the important purposes specified. A few towns have already acted upon that plan, and the public mind is earnestly called to it by the friends of education in other places. Wherever it can be adopted, it will tend to diminish the evils and to increase the efficiency of our educational system.

But were all the territory of the State judiciously divided into districts ; were there a just gradation in the schools ; were every schoolhouse good ; had every school the best teacher that could be found, and the guidance and encouragement of the most wise and assiduous school committee ; still, all these would be only preliminary steps in the numerous and complicated processes of Education. The true medium, in the government of schools, between austere demeanor and severity on the one hand, and, on the other, a facile temper, yielding to every pressure, and just according to the pressure ;—the great questions of rewards and punishments, whose influence spreads out over such wide tracts of feeling and character in after-life ;—the selection of motives to enkindle the ardor of children in their studies, together with the precedence of these motives in regard to each other, that is, whether the minds of children should be for ever turned outwards to the worldly advantages of wealth, office, rank, display, as incitements to duty ; or inwards, towards the perception of right and wrong in their own hearts, and to the noiseless, boundless rewards, which Nature gives for conscientious conduct, in spite of the laws, or power, or hate of men ;—the one course, setting the applause of the world before rectitude, the other, reversing their position :—and in regard to processes, more intellectual in their character ;—such as the succession of studies best tending to cultivate the mental powers, in the order of their natural developement ;—the question of a more or less rapid alternation from one study to another ;—the degrees in which either the instruction or government of a school should be modified, so as to be adapted to peculiarities of individual character ;—all these, and many more points, would remain to be settled before the outlines were filled up, of any thing worthy to be called a philosophical plan of Education. Surveying the subject, therefore, in the extent and diversity of its parts, the only practicable and useful course seemed to be, to select some particular topic, and, as far as possible, to collect facts, educe principles, and offer hints for practice. Science must grow out of observation ; art out of science.

From the earliest observations made on visiting schools, (and such as I have visited were, probably, above the average of schools in the State,) I have been impressed with the obvious want of intelligence, in the reading classes, respecting the subject-matter of the lessons. With some exceptions, I regret to say, that the eyes, features, and motions of the readers have indicated only bodily sensations, not mental activity ; while the volume of voice emitted has too closely resembled those mechanical contrivances for the transmission of fluids, which, with admirable precision, discharge equal quantities in equal times. At the same time, I was sure, that, had the subject-matter of the reading lesson been understood, it would have opened a fountain of pleasurable emotions within, whose streams would have flowed out through every channel of expression. And on examination, I have often found, that the black and white page of the book was the outer boundary of the reader's thoughts, and a barrier to arrest their progress, instead of being a vehicle to carry them onward or upward, into whatever region the author might have expatiated. When the pupils were directed to the subject-matter of the reading lesson, to the orderly unfolding of its parts, as branches proceeding from a common trunk, I have found them

committing mistakes which, though ludicrous as facts, were most lamentable as indications.

Deeming the mode, and the degree of success found to attend it, of teaching our children the orthography and significance of their mother tongue, to be the most important question which could be put in regard to their intellectual culture, I determined to make those points the main objects of inquiry in my annual visit into the different counties. For distinctness' sake, I proposed, among others, the two following questions to the school committees of the several towns in the State.

1st. "*Are scholars in your schools kept in spelling classes from the time of their earliest combination of letters, up to the time of their leaving school ; or what is the course ordinarily pursued, in regard to teaching orthography, and how long is it continued ?*"

2d. "*Are there defects in teaching scholars to read ? This inquiry is not made in regard to the pronunciation of words and the modulation of the voice. But do the scholars fail to understand the meaning of the words they read ? Do they fail to master the sense of the reading lessons ? Is there a presence in the minds of the scholars, when reading, of the ideas and feelings intended to be conveyed and excited by the author ?*"

In answer to another question, not here quoted, relative to the ages within which children attend our public schools, I have learned, that *exclusive* regulations, founded on age, exist in but very few towns—probably in not more than fifteen or twenty—in the State. And although the great majority of the children in the schools are between the ages of four and sixteen, yet, in almost all the towns, they are allowed to attend both earlier and later, and they are found from three, and sometimes from two years of age, up to twenty-one years, very frequently, and sometimes to twenty-four or twenty-five. I learn, also, that, with scarcely a single exception in the whole State, the scholars are kept in spelling classes, or they spell daily from their reading lessons, from the time of their earliest combination of letters, up to the time of their leaving school ; and yet, if testimony, derived from a thousand sources, and absolutely uniform, can be relied on, there is a Babel-like diversity in the spelling of our language.

It is impossible to ascertain with any considerable degree of precision the per centage of words in ordinary use, which the children are unable to spell ; but it seems to be the general opinion of the most competent observers, that the schools have retrograded within the last generation or half generation, in regard to orthography. Nor is the condition of the schools better in regard to reading, as will hereafter be shown.

(To be continued in our next Number.)

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY.

THE Publishers of the Series of Reading Books, under the above title, are happy in being able to state, that the first ten volumes of the larger series are now ready for delivery. These volumes are, *Life of Columbus*, by Washington Irving ; *Paley's Theology*, with the Notes and Dissertations of Sir Charles Bell and Lord Brougham, edited by Elisha Bartlett, M. D., of Lowell, with nearly one hundred illustrative engravings, in two volumes ; *Lives of Eminent Individuals celebrated in American History*, three volumes ; and *Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons*, by Rev. Henry Duncan, D. D., of Ruthwell, Scotland, with additions and modifications, and Notes, adapting it to American Readers, by Rev. F. W. P. Greenwood, D. D., in four volumes.

A part of the Juvenile series is also ready for delivery.

[THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL; published semi-monthly by Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, Boston: HORACE MANN, Editor. Price, One Dollar a year.]